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ABSTRACT

Students in the five year Austin Teacher Program at Austin College (Texas) major in academic disciplines--English, history, mathematics, biology--not in education. Child psychology, educational psychology, and educational philosophy courses are taken through the departments of psychology and philosophy. The primary undergraduate exposure to the field of education comes in a four-year sequence of credit and non-credit "labs" that combine theory with practice. During the sophomore lab, for example, students design and teach a 7- to 10-day unit as a culminating activity for a 30-hour field experience. The senior lab requires students to teach, under supervision, a one-semester class. During the fifth year of the program, previously acquired skills are honed and four years of learning and practice are integrated. This paper discusses salient features of the program, the philosophy that undergirds the program, its organizational features, the role of the liberal arts, and signs of effectiveness. Preliminary results of follow-up studies are included. The results indicate that graduates are qualitatively better prepared than their traditional counterparts. (JD)

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EXTENDED TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: MORE THAN TIME IS AT ISSUE

by John E. White

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INTRODUCTION

In 1968 a group of educational professionals at Austin College determined that an institution intending to adequately prepare teachers of tomorrow must use time allocations in other than traditional configurations. They further determined that a teacher education program driven by a philosophy such as theirs requires more time than is typically provided for in a baccalaureate degree in education. Therefore, in order to meet their goals they designed a program that naturally and logically spread itself through five years; then they went to the executive bodies for their authorization of both the program and the extra year.

The result, the Austin Teacher Program, abandons the traditional approach to teacher training. First of all, students major in academic disciplines - English, history, mathematics, biology - not in edcuation. Students in the program do take courses such as child psychology, educational psychology, and educational philosophy, but they take them through the departments of psychology and philosophy.

AC students' primary undergraduate exposure to the field of education comes in a four-year sequence of credit and non-credit "labs" that combine theory with practice. During the sophomore lab, for example, students design and teach a seven-to-ten-day unit as a culminating activity for a thirty-hour field experience. The senior lab requires students to teach, under supervision, a one-semester class. By the time AC students enter the fifth year of the program they are likely to have taught more hours in real classrooms than have most people who have finished student teaching elsewhere. It is during the fifth year that the student truly integrates all that has come before, so that when she/he is finally "turned loose" on a classroom as a student teacher/intern, the bulk of that time there is spent on honing skills previously acquired rather than on discovering major deficiencies that must be remedied in a few short weeks. To use Madeline Hunter's jargon, the Austin College student teaching experience is independent practice time - the time when student teachers are expected to perform with few errors.

In order to provide readers with an understanding of the Austin Teacher program, the rest of this paper will discuss (1) the philosophy that undergirds the program: (2) organizational features: (3) the role of the liberal arts: (4) signs of effectiveness.

PHILOSOPHY

What guides the Austin Teacher Program are beliefs that the Liberal Arts should serve as a basis for teaching, that pedagogical goals should reflect current knowledge, and that individualized learning will enable our students to provide that same individualization to their students. The following list of philosophical positions best illustrates that philosophy.

Position 1 The Austin Teacher Program is committed to meeting the changing needs of a changing social context. Therefore, it is developmental and flexible in structure, able to make changes as needs arise, basing such change on planned, periodic, qualitative evaluation of the program's effectiveness and of the professional and social contexts in which the program operates.

Position 2 The Austin Teacher Program is based on a Liberal Arts education.

Position 3 The Austin Teacher Program is a five-year program designed to include a professional graduate year which terminates in a master of arts degree.

Position 4 The curriculum of the Austin Teacher Program is designed to assist the student in the development of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable him or her to teach effectively.

Position 5 The Austin Teacher Program assists the student in designing and implementing an individualized, personalized program of preparation for effective teaching.

Position 6 The student must assume an active role in his or her program of preparation to become a teacher.

Position 7 Just as the Austin Teacher Program is developmental and flexible in nature (designed for planned, periodic change), so, too, are the roles assumed by its faculty.

Position 8 Evaluation of the prospective Austin Teacher- for the purpose of determining teaching effectiveness-is continuous, pluralistic, and subjective.

Position 9 The Austin Teacher Program is based on a cooperative alliance of Austin College, the education department, and the public schools.

Position 10 The Austin Teacher Program assists the student in identifying and responding constructively to the rigorous, sometimes conflicting standards of performance and behavior expected of teachers by society and by all partners to the teacher education process.

ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES

The program is organized in a way that allows students to concentrate primarily on their majors, electives, and Liberal Arts requirements as undergraduates. During that time they also are allowed to enroll in four "labs" that, beginning with the first one, progressively orient them to the totality of teaching. The fifth year coursework is devoted to one semester of student teaching/internship and two of methods and curriculum courses and/or further academic electives. A list of the courses taken and brief descriptions follows:

Undergraduate Courses

Education 11 — an introduction to the profession, with special focus on the Austin Teacher Program, general educational issues, and the roles and characteristics of teachers in schools. Students observe twelve hours in schools at various levels and try their hand at teaching each other.

Education 12 — an in-depth look at what constitutes a lesson plan. Students spend one third of the time learning how to plan and write up a lesson plan, another third of the time observing teachers, focusing primarily on the lesson, its content and sequence, and the final third of the time in teaching a unit that they have planned for.

Education 51 — an introduction to elements of effective teaching. Using materials developed by Performance Learning Systems students learn how to more effectively interact with their students, as disciplinarians, questioners, counselors, and learning facilitators. A special emphasis is placed on understanding learning styles and incorporating that understanding in lesson plans.

Education 52 — an extended miniature student teaching experience. Each student is assigned to teach one class per day for a twelve week period. During this time students are extensively observed so that they can remedy major deficiencies.

Graduate Year Courses

Education 556 — Topics in Education - a general survey course for all students in which they are exposed to major discipline theories, legal aspects of education, multicultural issues, special education issues, and educational technology.

Education 557 Topics in Elementary Education - basically a course on the elementary curriculum, with other depth studies of general methods, such as learning centers, cooperative learning, and inquiry lessons.

Education 558 Topics in Secondary Education - a course on the secondary curriculum, with special focus on each student's individual teaching field(s), and other depth studies of general methods such as inquiry strategies, research projects, lecture-discussion methods, and group learning.

Education 491 Developmental Reading - a course in which students are exposed to major theories of literacy development, with special emphasis on using whole language strategies to foster literacy development. Included in this course is a thirty-hour practicum. Elementary teachers and secondary English teachers take this course.

Education 598 Research and Synthesis - a course in which students learn to apply research principles to teaching decisions. Included are studies of tests and measurements, analysis of research methodologies, and in-depth analysis of the research in an area of special concern to the student.

Education 576/584 Student Teaching Experience - this is either a fourteen-week experience for those students assigned to student teaching, or a full semester assignment for those assigned to an internship. An intern is a student who has been approved to take a class on his/her own, mentored by a fellow teacher and supervised by one of the AC faculty. Those who have not been approved for such total control of a class, and those for whom an internship is not available receive the more traditional student teaching assignment.

Electives Two or more courses, usually in the student's teaching field(s) or in some academic area which is approved by the department.

ROLE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

As noted in the philosophical positions the Austin Teacher Program is based on a Liberal Arts undergraduate education. The rationale for that position states the following:

"The Liberal Arts education involves the prospective Austin Teacher in the study of the collective wisdom of humankind's most important learnings, accomplishments, and modes of

thought across a broad front described by the Arts and Sciences. In addition, intensive study in one or two areas of the Liberal Arts provides the student with a comprehensive fund of knowledge and methodology in the discipline(s) s/he intends to teach."

Students at Austin College are required to take a three-course sequence, the Heritage of Western Civilization series, in which, among other things, students are exposed to not only early Western thought, but also to later events, such as the incursion of new scientific modes and their effects on human development. Another requirement is that students select at least one course from each of ten different Exploratory Dimension areas, such as "Formal Thoght and Reasoning", or "Contemporary Social Policy Issues". In addition, Austin Teachers are required to have a sophomore-level proficiency in a foreign langluage.

SIGNS OF EFFECTIVENESS

As participants in the Model Teacher Induction Project we have been able to gather some information about our recent graduates that we think confirms our effectiveness. Based on the Stages of Concern instrument, developed by the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin, recent Austin College graduates compared favorably to teachers with several more years of experience. According to established norms beginning teachers tend to have concerns that are more closely related to either day-to-day survival or general personal acclimation to a new culture. Austin College graduates tended to be more concerned with such things as managing the learning activities, understanding the consequences of their actions for their students, and adapting their teaching strategies as the context dictated.

Recently, the education department has undertaken a study of its graduates, that at this point is in its first stage. Using an internally developed questionnaire we are attempting to determine how well-prepared our students were when they started teaching. We also were interested to see how they compared themselves to other beginners, and whether they thought the items we were asking about were the important ones. In later stages of this study we intend to gather information from these teachers' supervisors in order to compare ratings; finally we plan to gather similar information from a sample of non-Austin college graduates.

On the survey, the respondents were asked to respond to certain items by circling a number from 1 (strong), to 5 (weak) that corresponded with their assessment of the following:

- -the quality of their preparation to begin teaching
- -the quality of preparation first-year teachers who completed teacher education programs at other institutions
- -the importance to a first-year teacher of being prepared in that area

Specific items selected for review in this paper are as follows:

Methods Variables

1. classroom management strategies
2. accommodating individual student differences
3. creative and innovative teaching strategies
4. developing classroom environment
5. using discovery methods
6. using learning centers
7. use of resource materials
8. unit and daily planning
9. long-range planning
10. instructional use of computers

Content Variables

11. reading (elementary teachers only)
12. writing "
13. science "
14. math "
15. social studies "
16. art "
17. music "
18. PE "
19. first teaching field (secondary teachers only)
20. second teaching field "

Preliminary results of selected items indicate that AC students in general felt well-prepared, especially in comparison to others. By dividing the respondents into two groups - early graduates (1972-75), and recent graduates (1983-86) we discerned another trend. Recent grauates felt even better prepared than did their early counterparts.

Tables 1 and 2 below show the results for the self - other comparisons. One can see that the 1975 group felt better prepared on 6 of 10 methods items (variables 1-10) and on 9 of 10 content items (variables 11-20). They especially saw themselves better prepared on the individualization, creativity, and first and second field variables. One area in which they felt less prepared , and weakly prepared, was that of use of computers. That is not a surprising finding for a pre-1980's group from any teacher education program. For the 1986 group the comparisons are much stronger. The AC group felt better prepared on all of the methods variables and on 9 of 10 content variables. Also, degree of difference is more pronounced, as seen in the ten variables where the difference approached or exceeded one point.

Table 1. COMPARISON OF SELF AND OTHERS 1975 GROUP

NUM	VARIABLE	SELF75	OTHER75	DIFFERENCE
1	CLASSROOM MGT.	2.42	3.36	-.94
2	UNIT/DAILY PLNG	2.77	2.72	.05
3	LONG-RANGE PLNG	2.83	2.89	-.06
4	INDIVIDUALIZATION	2.58	3.50	-.92
5	CREATIVITY	2.10	3.29	-1.19
6	LEARNING CENTERS	2.16	2.90	-.74
7	RESOURCES	2.43	2.74	-.31
8	COMPUTERS	4.82	4.20	.62
9	CLASS ENVIRONMENT	2.94	2.62	.32
10	INQUIRY	2.90	3.52	-.62
11	FIRST FIELD	1.47	2.42	-.95
12	SECOND FIELD	1.64	2.83	-1.19
13	SCIENCE	3.53	4.00	-.47
14	MATH	3.33	3.37	-.04
15	SOCIAL STUDIES	3.00	3.78	-.78
16	READING	3.13	3.40	-.27
17	WRITING	4.00	3.75	.25
18	ART	3.33	3.87	-.54
19	PE	3.67	4.00	-.33
20	MUSIC	3.93	4.37	-.44

Table 2. COMPARISON OF SELF AND OTHERS: 1986 GROUP

NUM	VARIABLE	SELF86	OTHER86	DIFFERENCE
1	CLASSROOM MGT.	2.16	3.09	-.93
2	UNIT/DAILY PLNG	1.76	2.71	-.95
3	LONG-RANGE PLNG	2.24	3.37	-1.13
4	INDIVIDUALIZATION	2.16	2.70	-.54
5	CREATIVITY	1.56	3.05	-1.49
6	LEARNING CENTERS	2.32	2.57	-.25
7	RESOURCES	2.08	3.05	-.97
8	COMPUTERS	3.40	4.05	-.65
9	CLASS ENVIRONMENT	2.56	2.57	-.01
10	INQUIRY	2.29	3.32	-1.03
11	FIRST FIELD	1.54	2.73	-1.19
12	SECOND FIELD	1.50	3.12	-1.62
13	SCIENCE	3.00	3.36	-.36
14	MATH	2.23	2.72	-.49
15	SOCIAL STUDIES	2.54	3.64	-1.10
16	READING	1.61	2.36	-.75
17	WRITING	1.67	3.20	-1.53
18	ART	3.85	3.30	.55
19	PE	3.71	3.90	-.19
20	MUSIC	3.92	4.20	-.28

Finally, Table 3 compares the two groups' self ratings of preparedness. Again, the recent graduates felt better prepared in most areas. On the methods variables recent grads rated their preparation higher than did the early grads on 9 of 10 variables. On the content variables they were slightly closer together, with exceptions in the areas of math reading and writing. The 1986 group rated their preparation much higher in those areas. This result is particularly gratifying because it reflects a change in focus in the elementary curriculum course that was needed and seems to have been accomplished.

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF SELF 1975 AND SELF 1986 GROUPS

NUM	VARIABLE	SELF75	SELF86	DIFFERENCE
1	CLASSROOM MGT.	2.42	2.16	.26
2	UNIT/DAILY PLNG	2.77	1.76	1.01
3	LONG-RANGE PLNG	2.83	2.24	.59
4	INDIVIDUALIZATION	2.58	2.16	.42
5	CREATIVITY	2.10	1.56	.54
6	LEARNING CENTERS	2.16	2.32	-.16
7	RESOURCES	2.43	2.08	.35
8	COMPUTERS	4.82	3.40	1.42
9	CLASS ENVIRONMENT	2.94	2.56	.38
10	INQUIRY	2.90	2.29	.61
11	FIRST FIELD	1.47	1.54	-.07
12	SECOND FIELD	1.64	1.50	.14
13	SCIENCE	3.53	3.00	.53
14	MATH	3.33	2.23	1.10
15	SOCIAL STUDIES	3.00	2.54	.46
16	READING	3.13	1.61	1.52
17	WRITING	4.00	1.67	2.33
18	ART	3.33	3.85	-.52
19	PE	3.67	3.71	-.04
20	MUSIC	3.93	3.92	.01

While there are areas of preparation that we need to continue working on, such as music art and PE for elementary teachers, and use of computers and developing classroom environment for all respondents, it is apparent that Austin Teacher Program graduates who responded are quite satisfied with their preparation.

One other sign of program effectiveness is the performance of our graduates on the recently legislated exit tests. At this date Austin College is one of the few programs to have a 100% passing rate. Although this is just the first year of such testing, and our numbers are few, we are encouraged that our passing rate is approximately 20% above the statewide average.

CONCLUSION

Having learned much from our experiences over the years, I would like to offer several cautions, or challenges, to those who would consider such program innovation for their institutions.

First, are you really planning to have a five-year program? Will students be involved in education department activities over the whole five years? Or are you really only adding a third year to what is for all practical purposes a two-year program now? Teachers develop over time, and those institutions who neglect would-be teachers as freshmen and sophomores will not be meeting real developmental needs. Fully half of our freshmen prospects opt not to continue past their sophomore year. They make such a decision based on an assessment of their own interests, abilities, and experiences in real school settings. By the time our remaining students are juniors they have logged an average of 100 hours in schools or school- related activities. Those who stay with us have a much clearer understanding of what they need to learn in order to be a successful teacher. Why wait until their junior year to face these issues? If we're ever to have a significant effect on developing professional perspective, it only seems logical that we introduce our students to the world of schools and schooling much earlier.

Another question is that of academic foundations. Are you going to continue to offer baccalaureate degrees in education rather than in academic subjects? A major concern in the debate over current teacher quality is that related to teachers' general and specific knowledge. If there are gaps in teachers' knowledge can you eliminate them in traditional programs? I don't think so. The hours required for an education major lessen the number of hours students can take in other courses, either of a general nature, or in their specialty. It's quite common for secondary education majors to have taken only twenty-four hours -twelve of which are upper level-in an academic area for which they are being certified. A fundamental obligation of any teacher education program is to provide teachers with a quality Liberal Arts background and a substantial major during their undergraduate years. It's much easier for a teacher to be good if he/she is broadly educated and knows more than what is in any currently adopted textbook.